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Bard

BUNDESLIGA

The Darmstadt team and heads foots its
mottled ball angrily around the tv screen
and a dog watches.

No one understands
what I'm talking about and whose fault is that?

Crosby Street 1959. A bar
emptied of its denizens
to which an alien arrives.
Era of grape jokes. Land
of Midian where an uneasy traveler
hides his portable idol
secretly behind the clothes in your closet.
Ridiculous manifestations of minor league
bad karma come, you try to counteract
by a crucifix nailed above the door.
You stop wearing clothes. You stop
reading books. Naked you stand
by the smudgy window
parsing pedestrians five flights below.
Pigeons worry about you. Somehow
a dog has gotten onto the roof of
the dying factory across the street,
a dog. It looks at you, barking
from time to time, sheltering
from the strong afternoon sunlight
arriving from Jersey, he barks at you
from the shade of the old wooden cistern

elevated above so many New York roofs.
In all your life you've never looked inside
but that's where the water comes from.
There may be one above your head
at this very moment, a wooden cup
uplifted, offered to the same peculiar god
the dog is watching, the other
dog is talking to, he took your clothes,
the tears run down your cheeks, now
do you understand me?

27 March 2003

PORTUGUESE DESPERADOES NABBED IN FINLAND

MECKLENBURG NURSE FINDS CURE FOR PIMPLES

NORTHERN EUROPE CHOOSES BLAND CHEESES

WOODPECKERS YIELD CLUE TO QUANTUM

HERRINGBRINE IN YOUR MEDICINE CABINET

LIFE-GIVING FUNGUS OF LAPP TUNDRA

WILD BOAR SPERM TRUFFLE ORIGIN THEORY

MASKED MEN FLEE SYNAGOGUE

SOUTH FRANCE CHURCH LOOT LOST

LONG LOST OPERA FILLS SEATS

27 March 2003

THE SOFA

is trying to explain
everything happened
just today, how love
gets always made
unfinished business
trying to tune in China
on a dead shortwave
later, and everything
seems old-fashioned
except this, this,
that when they say
goodbye they taste
of each other,
what else can it be
so the next thing you know
they're on the sofa
five floors in the sky
nobody goes.

27 March 2003

REVOLUTION

We belong to it
surely
because the alternatives
do not bear the weight
of even the slightest Hmong
spice vendor in the market
carrying dried neem leaves
unsold over a rope bridge
back to her hidden hill
so don't look up from gazing
glumly at the once-busy harbor
snugged in from the Baltic
grey with reflecting
the town roofs of Kaliningrad
behind which the various old
bridges of the town
mount flat to realms
stripped of conjecture
by the certainty of some
process
step by step,
like a goat going over
a bridge in Chiapas
a country full of poetry and death.

28 March 2003

CONFESSING MY ANXIETIES

Just setting their names down
takes me there. Algarve.
I'm sorry, to Israel just once
for a better bar mitzvah, and looking
at the names on the maps
I am in Africa already
and I wonder what that river
was I saw, literal blue
in yellow desert, just like a picture,
down there, on what I supposed
was the actual earth I flew above
without a name to pin it down
or tell me what I thought I saw.
A man sees nothing but colors.
There is nothing in the world.

28 March 2003

THE TEMPLE

Not for the first time I have to wonder
what did the Rabbis of the Mishnah mean
when they said: The next time
it will be rebuilt in the world of melody.
Its long lines cruising up the air
until some great sonorous accord
locks it in as much stability
as a soul needs, or a people, or a man
staring at the sky, as if Schönberg
and Mahler flooded back together
to that secret Jew, Palestrina,
and all the voices ever conceived
rubbed elbows in one single choir and
sounded — almost shyly —
for one half second or so the same tone?

But I loved you for the timbre
of your different voices,
not your forced or feigned agreements
said the Lord. I loved you
for the quarrel in you,
kisses and hisses.

So maybe the Rabbis
meant an Ohrwurm, the little tune
gets in your head you can't shake loose,
all day it hums along inside your head
and sometimes you hear your voice chime in

embarrassing you on the U-Bahn or the ferry,
a commuter yielding to secret music

and suddenly everybody knows the tune you think,
is that is, is that the temple
of Solomon the Wise rebuilt, everybody
knows everything, and nowhere to hide
and we look around and ask
did God made this place too?

28 March 2003

DETAILS

The detail of people's lives,
that I keep a bottle of quinine water
in between the bucket seats
for leg cramps on long drives,
that tonic cures leg cramps,
that it really does have quinine in it,
that quinine (which Canadians
pronounce kin-neen) was brought
to Europe by the Jesuits
from Paraguay, where they once ran
a kind of theocratic government,
paternalistic but kind to the Indians,
which is why Paraguay is the only
South American country where
the native language is official,
Guarani, but then the Pope
suppressed them, the Jesuits,
that I was educated by them,
the Jesuits, until I broke away
and suppressed the Pope in my heart
and ran away at fourteen
when my leg cramps really got bad
so I spent a week in the hospital,
Episcopal, on Atlantic Avenue,
where I read for the first time
Eliot's Four Quartets and
everything was never the same.

28 March 2003

FLOWERS

Knowing something.
It is the morning
of the first flower—
blue-eyed grasses
on the path to
the stone Buddha
and then around him.
Such a long winter
he almost smiles.

29 March 2003

PLANTING TREES

A part of it,
plant many

one by one
each joy
augments the world

Every moment
of conscious pleasure
enriches everybody

the world is mostly
sorrow, it's up to me
to accumulate
and bring to function
the healing wave
of conscious pleasure
old books call joy.

Gaudium. The bliss.

29 March 2003

POSTERS

I need to find some means
to find some friends to put
posters up for me,
big ones that tell in some detail
the excellences of me.

In shadow writing honestly
as well my faults
and shortcomings are explained
grey on black, locked
but not hidden inside
the powerful graphic design.

The gesture of the whole.

I am who I am and I want
you to know me. I am proud
of my sin. My sin is me.

29 March 2003

MAGIC SQUARES

But it
wind is

count by
does he

or she
better

29 March 2003

THE ARISTOTELIAN QUALITIES

What does that mean?

Means lilacs soon
and this red stone.

A yellow thing
will happen, and a rose.

2.

But colors.

Colors are not.

Colors are not the adjectives of things.
Other way round.

An apple is a thing
that happens to red.

You happen to me.

29 March 2003

BIRD LORE

But the spirit is a crow in these climes not a dove
which can't live here. But spirit lives a dove when it can
and walks puff-bosomed round my house then
perches white in palm trees many stories down
below my window in Waikiki, I state the simple
fact, I too lived once in Arcadia, I too
have come to nibble on your breast.

2.

We should biographize our citizens
not by where they're born but where they die,
what target pulls their lives to itself,
summoning, and the death-day song
they hear their whole life long,
moving towards that dim music,
the sinister astrology,

 and death
is just my next address
but oh the moving-men that take me there.

3.

That's what the white birds down below
my hotel balcony explained to me,
Diamond Head, Montreux, New Delhi,
always has to be a tenuous hotel
protecting travelers from earth and sky.
Guest house of the consciousness.
Whereas the swallows, better birds,

ride all the time, up there, ride the currents
of the air, never come down except to die,
mate and die, the spirit sleeps along the air
and swoops down to call me, and why me?
with intermittent swallow cries.

4.

My thick body sleeps its way towards you,
my whole life is just one shadow of
some other information passing overhead.

30 March 2003

TRYING TO FIND A WAY

is not easy, it's always

hidden in a word

but how deep in?

Just give me the word

make sure it's the right one

and I'll follow it forever

till I get there

even if you're not sure it leads

anywhere but you.

30 March 2003

Though it's not clear what they had in mind
when advisors to the Tyrant of Syracuse
recommended some philosophers be summoned
from a foreign and not very friendly state
to develop a world-wide system of peaceful
commercial relations to be called Civilization,
it doesn't much matter since nothing happened.
And everything always turns into a war.

30 March 2003

THE LAWFUL RIDER

Carrying a basket of snakes a dead man
rides a horse with horns,
a horse with soft feet
coming out of the black dawn.

I have come to you again, he says.
You say: Seeing you now
for the first time I know you are gone —
what happened, was it just time?

The dead man threatens to dismount,
These snakes are yours, he says,
they are the unexpected but logical
(a snake means logic) consequences

of everything you've ever wanted.
Hence alphabet, hence all the letters
you ever wrote or forgot to mail
or fingertipped through the steam

your breath left on the bathroom mirror,
here. And he poured out of his
basket nothing you could actually see.
But the sun rose.

31 March 2003

THE NEAR WEST

Already by Buffalo we came into the Near West,
began to feel relief from Boston paranoia and New York bottom line,
Here the Pacific begins to work its spell on us
already, Europe and its attitudes shimmer into silence.
Too many things to make sense of at once,
Cleveland and even further, Toledo, then south,
this was lake once, a great mosque rises from the plain.
We didn't know what to say or who to say it to,
we bought cheese and ate it in the car,
hoping for the best. The great mosque of Toledo
tells you all the maps are wrong,
its minarets point in all directions at once
but you knew it all along, farriers kill horses,
physicians bilk the sick, what went wrong?
America was too much for us, Ameruca, Amariuca,
we turned into rattlesnakes and poison ivy
we killed anything that had a name.

31 March 2003

